IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 to read as follows.

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1.   (Currently Amended) An encoding apparatus for packetizing variable-length encoding data using ~~by~~ a packet format in which a header of a packet has an area indicating the length of the packet and the range of values indicating the packet length is limited, comprising:

a)   inputting ~~input~~ means for inputting variable-length encoding image data which includes a picture header indicating the start of one picture;

b)   header detecting ~~detection~~ means for detecting the picture header input by said inputting means;

c)   data length detecting means for detecting whether a data length of image data for one picture input by said inputting means reaches a predetermined value, wherein the predetermined value is less than or equal to a maximum value of the packet length which can be specified in the header ~~of the variable-length encoding data~~; and

d)   packetizing means ~~for packetizing the~~ variable-length packetizing the variable-length encoding image data in accordance with ~~according to the~~ output of said header detecting ~~detection~~ means and said data length detecting means ~~such that the packet length is set within the maximum value which can be specified in the header~~.

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2.　(Currently Amended)　An encoding apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said packetizing means generates a PES packet corresponding to data conforming to an MPEG system from the variable-length encoding image data.

3.　(Original)　An encoding apparatus according to Claim 2, further comprising second packetizing means for applying second packetization to packet data packetized by said packetizing means, by a predetermined data length.

4.　(Original)　An encoding apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein a packet generated by said second packetizing means is a TS packet.

5.　(Original)　An encoding apparatus according to Claim 4. further comprising pickup means for capturing an image of an object and for generating image data; and encoding means for applying variable-length encoding to the image data.

6.　(Currently Amended)　An encoding apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising recording means for recording the variable-length encoding image data packetized by said packetizing means into a recording medium.

7.　(Currently Amended)　An encoding method for packetizing variable-length encoding data by using a packet format in which a header of a packet has an area indicating the length of the packet and the range of values indicating the packet length is limited,

comprising the steps of:

inputting variable-length encoding <u>image</u> data <u>which includes a picture header</u>
<u>indicating the start of one picture</u>;

<u>a first detecting step of detecting the picture header input in said inputting step</u>;

<u>a second detecting step of</u> detecting ~~the~~ <u>whether a</u> data length of ~~the~~
~~variable-length encoding data~~ <u>image data for one picture input in said inputting step reaches a</u>
<u>predetermined value, the predetermined value being less than or equal to a maximum value of the</u>
<u>packet length which can be specified in the header</u>; and

<u>variable-length</u> packetizing the variable-length encoding <u>image</u> data ~~according~~
~~to the output of a detection such that the packet length is set within the maximum value which~~
~~can be specified in the header~~ <u>in accordance with the results of said first and second detecting</u>
<u>steps</u>.

8.   (Currently Amended) A recording medium which can be read by a
computer and which records a program for packetizing variable-length encoding data ~~by~~ <u>using</u> a
packet format in which a header of a packet has an area indicating the length of the packet and
the range of values indicating the packet length is limited, the program comprising <u>codes to</u>
<u>perform</u>:

input processing for inputting variable-length encoding <u>image</u> data <u>which</u>
<u>includes a picture header indicating the start of one picture</u>;

<u>first detection processing for detecting the picture header input by said input</u>
<u>processing</u>;

second detection processing for detecting ~~the~~ <u>whether a</u> data length of ~~the~~ ~~variable-length encoding data~~ <u>image data for one picture input by said input processing reaches a</u> <u>predetermined value, the predetermined value being less than or equal to a maximum value of the</u> <u>packet length which can be specified in the header;</u> and

packetizing processing for <u>variable-length</u> packetizing the variable-length encoding <u>image</u> data ~~according to the output of a detection such that the packet length is set~~ ~~within the maximum value which can be specified in the header~~ <u>in accordance with output of</u> <u>said first and second detection processing</u>.